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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000286

SIPDIS

STATE/NEA FOR A/S WELCH AND ARPI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2013

TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: SALEH SIGNALS SHAKE UP IN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

AFTER JAIL BREAKOUT

REF: A. A) SANAA 235 (EXDIS)

[B. SANAA 266](#)

[C. B\) SANAA 272](#)

[D. TD-314/08298-06](#)

Classified By: DCM NABEEL A.KHOURY FOR REASONS 1.4 B & D

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Summary:  
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[¶11. \(S\)](#) CDA Requested and received a phone call from President Saleh, 2/5, on the heels of the jail break-out that yielded 23 al-Qa'ida operatives to the streets of Sanaa, and perhaps beyond. CDA stressed to Saleh the importance of working in close tandem with the USG on this critical issue and not allowing any misunderstanding to develop because of delays or reluctance anywhere in his services to share information and coordinate efforts. Saleh assured CDA that the issue is being accorded the highest priority and that coordination with the U.S. would be very thorough. He requested assistance in trying to locate and apprehend the escapees but suggested that our cooperation would have to be with the relatively new National Security Bureau (NSB) as opposed to the Political Security Organization (PSO) which is undergoing a thorough investigation "from top to bottom" because of their failure to prevent the escape. The good news here is the seriousness with which the matter is being treated; the bad news is that the NSB lacks the experience and the staffing of the PSO and has had a less than stellar record in its dealings with the U.S. Embassy. End Summary.

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The Need to Know:  
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[¶12. \(S\)](#) The Embassy's Emergency Action Committee met, 2/5, to discuss the escape of 23 al-Qa'ida operatives from a high security PSO jail in Sanaa on 2/3. Other than considering immediate security implications for the Mission, members looked at the long-term implications for the U.S. and the region and agreed that the longer these individuals stayed at large, the more dangerous they would become - with time on their hands to reconnect with their old contacts and to plot new operations in Yemen and the region. In that context, EAC members worried about the level of cooperation the relevant agencies at the Mission are likely to see from the Yemenis, at a time when the temptation to cover up mistakes might be strongest. The request to speak to President Saleh was made with this anxiety in mind.

[¶13. \(S\)](#) During his subsequent conversation with the President, CDA did not have a chance to finish expressing concern over the escape when Saleh cut in, "If you are concerned, imagine how I feel. I'm furious that my services have shown such weakness and I'm concerned about our reputation and about others taking advantage of this weakness. Please let Washington know that we have no higher priority right now than to find out what went wrong and to fix it." Saleh said he was confident that the escapees would be rounded up in short order but that discovering the vulnerabilities in his "services" was the more serious challenge.

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Interneccine Rivalry:  
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[¶14. \(S\)](#) CDA urged Saleh to instruct his services to work closely with the U.S. Embassy and to leave no doubt in anyone's mind that this is a joint fight in which all information is to be shared completely and in real-time. Saleh responded by inviting the USG to join in the investigation and the hunt but added, "you will be working with the NSB because the entire PSO is under investigation, from top to bottom." Knowing that Saleh's nephew, Ammar Saleh, NSB's number two, was in charge and has been known to horde information, CDA asked Saleh to please give clear instructions to his nephew on working closely with the Embassy. Saleh said that he had not yet spoken to his nephew but had given instructions to NSB Director, Ali al-Anesi, to do exactly that. (Comment: Ammar Saleh's competitiveness with the PSO has not been such a well kept secret and the young man is probably literally biting his fingernails in

anticipation of replacing the older, and still head of the PSO, General Gamesh as his uncle's trusted advisor on security and intelligence matters. End comment.)

15. (S) Saleh added a plea for assistance: "We will work closely with you but you have to be more forthcoming in your assistance. I need the right equipment to track these people and you are the only ones who have the most sophisticated machinery for this job. I also need you to hurry up with military assistance we need to end the rebellion in the north which is tying up our security forces. Please tell Washington these are not normal times and we need your help fast."

Comment:

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16. (S) Saleh's anxiety seemed genuine. He was clearly shaken and agitated by the event and realized what an escape of this magnitude does to his reputation as a reliable ally in the GWOT. The good news is that this is a good time to exercise leverage over Saleh's decisions with timely, yet discrete, assistance. The bad news is that the shake-up, already underway in PSO ranks, might leave Yemen even more vulnerable to security threats and ultimately place all terrorism related matters under the control of Ammar Saleh, a corrupt and immature young man with demonstrated suspicion of and reluctance to work with the USG. We intend to speak very bluntly to the younger Saleh about our lack of tolerance of any delays or gaps in his coordination with us in the challenges that lie ahead. End comment.

Krajeski